

BUDDHISM AND JIU-JITSU



The Dharma on the Mat

Path, Awareness, and Combat

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INTRODUCTION

There is a moment in Jiu-Jitsu when everything stops.

You are under pressure. The weight of your opponent crushes your chest. Air becomes scarce. The mind begins to panic.

And then, there is a choice.

To enter the chaos... or to find the silence.

It is in this moment that Jiu-Jitsu ceases to be merely a fight.

And becomes a path.

What few realize is that this path has been walked before—not on the mat, but within the human mind.

More than two thousand years ago, a man named Siddhartha Gautama renounced everything in order to understand suffering. He did not seek to defeat external opponents, but to overcome ignorance, fear, and attachment.

He became the Buddha.

And what he discovered was the Dharma—the profound law of reality.

This book arises from a simple yet powerful insight:

The mat is a field where the Dharma manifests.

Every match reveals the mind.

Every mistake reveals the ego.

Every victory reveals attachment.

Every defeat reveals the truth.

Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu, though modern in its form, carries an ancestral legacy. It is born from Japanese jujutsu, passes through Judo, arrives in Brazil with Mitsuyo Maeda, and blossoms in the hands of the Gracie family.

But along with the techniques, something invisible was also transmitted:

A spirit.
Discipline.
Silence.
Presence.
Respect.

These are not merely martial values.

They are expressions of the Dharma.

This book is an invitation.

Not only to fight better—

But to live better.

To transform training into spiritual practice.
To transform combat into self-knowledge.
To transform Jiu-Jitsu into a path of awakening.

Here is born what we may call:

The Dharma of Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu.

PART I – ROOTS AND ENCOUNTERS

CHAPTER 1 – THE CALL OF THE MAT

Every Jiu-Jitsu practitioner feels it at some point.

Something calls.

It is not just the desire to fight.

It is something deeper.

A need to test oneself.

To know oneself.

To overcome oneself.

The mat does not lie.

There, there are no masks.

You can hide your insecurity in daily life. You can disguise your anxiety. You can construct an image.

But on the mat... everything appears.

Fear appears.

The ego appears.

Anger appears.

Weakness appears.

And that is exactly what makes Jiu-Jitsu so powerful.

Because it reveals.

And what is revealed can be transformed.

In Buddhism, this is called seeing reality as it truly is.

Without illusions.

Without distortions.

Without self-deception.

The practitioner who stays long enough in Jiu-Jitsu begins to notice something curious:

The external fight begins to become an internal one.

He starts to recognize his patterns:

- Always panics under pressure
- Gets frustrated when losing
- Clings to victory
- Avoids challenges

And then a new possibility arises:

To train not only the body, but the mind.

This is the true call of the mat.

CHAPTER 2 – THE ORIGINS OF JIU-JITSU

Jiu-Jitsu did not begin in Brazil.

It is the result of a long evolution.

In feudal Japan, samurai developed combat systems for situations in which they were unarmed. These techniques became known as jujutsu.

It was not a sport.

It was survival.

The focus was not aesthetics.

It was efficiency.

Over time, these techniques began to be organized and refined. Then emerges a fundamental figure:

Jigoro Kano.

Kano did more than gather techniques. He created a system.

Judo.

But more than that, he created a pedagogy.

He introduced principles such as:

- Maximum efficiency with minimum effort
- Mutual benefit

This already points to something beyond fighting.

It points to a path.

One of his most important students was Mitsuyo Maeda.

Maeda took the knowledge of Judo (still very close to jujutsu) to the world.

And eventually arrived in Brazil.

CHAPTER 3 – FROM JAPAN TO BRAZIL

When Mitsuyo Maeda arrived in Brazil, he did not bring only techniques.

He brought a tradition.

A way of seeing combat.

A way of training.

A way of living.

In Pará, he taught Carlos Gracie.

And from that point on, something unique began to happen.

The Gracie family adapted the system.

Hélio Gracie, with a lighter and less physically strong body, was forced to refine the techniques.

He removed the excess.

Simplified.

Deepened efficiency.

He created something new:

Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu.

But here is an essential point:

Even with all the adaptations, the essence remained.

The search for efficiency.

Constant adaptation.

Intelligence in combat.

These principles resonate deeply with the Dharma.

CHAPTER 4 – THE SPIRIT OF BUDO

In Japan, martial arts were not merely techniques.

They were paths.

The term “Budo” means exactly that:

The Martial Way.

This path involved:

- Discipline
- Ethics
- Self-control
- Spiritual development

Many practitioners had contact with Zen Buddhism.

Zen deeply influenced martial behavior.

The idea of the empty mind.

The idea of total presence.

The idea of acting without hesitation.

All of this comes from that influence.

Combat became a form of meditation in motion.

And this leads us to a profound understanding:

The true opponent was never the other.

It has always been the mind itself.

CHAPTER 5 – THE BUDDHA AND THE WARRIOR

Siddhartha Gautama was born into a context very different from what many imagine.

He was not an ascetic from the beginning.

He was a prince.

And more than that:

He belonged to the Shakya clan—a warrior lineage.

As a member of that society, he was trained.

Archery.

Combat.

Physical endurance.

He was not weak.

He did not flee from life.

He understood life deeply.

His great turning point was not abandoning strength.

It was understanding suffering.

He realized that:

- Everything changes
- Everything passes
- Everything conditioned gives rise to suffering

And so he chose to seek liberation.

This shows us something essential:

The path of the Buddha is not opposed to the path of the warrior.

It is the refinement of the warrior.

CHAPTER 6 – TAKUAN AND THE UNFETTERED MIND

Takuan Soho was a Zen monk who deeply influenced martial artists in Japan.

His most famous teaching is simple and devastating:

The mind must not fix itself anywhere.

In combat, this is everything.

If the mind becomes fixed:

- on victory → you become anxious
- on fear → you freeze
- on technique → you lose fluidity

The free mind is an adaptable mind.

In Jiu-Jitsu, this is visible.

The advanced practitioner does not fight with rigidity.

He flows.

He responds.

He does not force.

This is Zen.

PART II – THE DHARMA AND REALITY

CHAPTER 7 – WHAT IS THE DHARMA

The word “Dharma” is one of the deepest in the entire Buddhist tradition.

It does not have a single translation.

It can mean:

- Universal law
- Truth
- Path
- Teaching
- The nature of reality

But in practice, Dharma is that which sustains everything.

It is the invisible structure of existence.

In the context of Jiu-Jitsu, we can understand Dharma as:

The truth that reveals itself through practice.

On the mat, Dharma appears directly:

You cannot deceive gravity.

You cannot deceive technique.

You cannot deceive time.

If you make a mistake, you pay for it.

If you learn, you evolve.

This is Dharma.

It is not punishment.

It is natural consequence.

The practitioner who understands this stops blaming others.

And begins to look within.

CHAPTER 8 – THE FOUR NOBLE TRUTHS ON THE MAT

The Buddha's central teaching begins with four simple and profound truths.

1. There is suffering

In Jiu-Jitsu, this is evident.

Fatigue.

Pain.

Frustration.

Defeat.

All of this is part of the path.

To deny it is to deny reality.

2. Suffering has a cause

On the mat, suffering comes from:

- ego
- attachment to victory
- fear of losing
- lack of preparation

3. Suffering can cease

When the practitioner lets go of attachment, something changes.

He continues to fight.

But without desperation.

Without the need to prove something.

4. There is a path

That path is conscious training.

It is technical development.

But also mental.

Practiced correctly, Jiu-Jitsu becomes that path.

CHAPTER 9 – THE EIGHTFOLD PATH APPLIED TO JIU-JITSU

The Buddha taught a path of eight aspects.

In Jiu-Jitsu, we can apply it like this:

1. Right View
Understanding that training is about evolution, not ego.
2. Right Intention
Training to improve, not to humiliate.
3. Right Speech
Respect within the academy.
4. Right Action
Training safely.
5. Right Livelihood
Teaching with ethics.
6. Right Effort
Consistent discipline.
7. Mindfulness
Presence during the fight.
8. Concentration
Total focus on the present moment.

This is the path of the conscious fighter.

CHAPTER 10 – KARMA AND CONSEQUENCE

Karma is not destiny.

It is action.

And every action generates a consequence.

In Jiu-Jitsu, this is immediate.

Train little → evolve little

Train well → evolve well

Train with ego → suffer

The mat is one of the clearest places to understand Karma.

There is no injustice.

Only result.

CHAPTER 11 – SAMBARA: THE SIX REALMS

Buddhism describes six states of existence.

They are not only places.

They are states of mind.

1. Realm of the Devas (Gods)

A state of pleasure, victory, and comfort.

In Jiu-Jitsu:

- when you are winning
- when everything works

Danger: arrogance.

2. Realm of the Asuras (Jealous Warriors)

A state of intense competition.

In Jiu-Jitsu:

- wanting to prove you are better
- envying another's progress

Danger: constant conflict.

3. Human Realm

A state of balance and awareness.

In Jiu-Jitsu:

- when you learn
- when you observe
- when you evolve

This is the best state for growth.

4. Animal Realm

An instinctive state.

In Jiu-Jitsu:

- brute strength
- automatic reaction
- lack of technique

5. Realm of Hungry Ghosts

A state of insatiable desire.

In Jiu-Jitsu:

- never being satisfied
- always wanting to win
- never feeling enough

6. Hell Realm

A state of extreme suffering.

In Jiu-Jitsu:

- intense pressure
- exhaustion
- desperation

CHAPTER 12 – THE MAT AS A MIRROR OF SAMBARA

During a single match, you can pass through all the realms.

You begin confident (Deva)

You lose position (Asura)

You fall into despair (Hell)

You resort to brute force (Animal)

You calm down (Human)

All of this in minutes.

Jiu-Jitsu is a laboratory of the mind.

It shows who you are.

And more importantly:

It shows who you can become.

PART III – MAHAYANA AND THE WARRIOR'S PATH

CHAPTER 13 – THE BODHISATTVA ON THE MAT

In Mahayana Buddhism, the ideal is not only to attain enlightenment.

It is to help all beings.

This is the Bodhisattva.

In Jiu-Jitsu, this manifests in a practical way:

- teaching beginners
- helping training partners evolve
- avoiding unnecessary harm

The true practitioner does not seek only to win.

He elevates everyone around him.

CHAPTER 14 – THE HEART SUTRA

The central teaching:

Form is emptiness. Emptiness is form.

In Jiu-Jitsu:

No position is permanent.

No advantage lasts forever.

Everything changes.

Everything transforms.

The one who understands this does not cling.

And therefore becomes free.

CHAPTER 15 – EMPTINESS AND STRATEGY

Emptiness does not mean “nothing.”

It means the absence of fixity.

In combat:

Do not cling to a technique.

Do not become trapped in a rigid plan.

The best fighter is the one who adapts.

CHAPTER 16 – COMPASSION IN COMBAT

It may seem contradictory.

But compassion is essential.

Without compassion:

- training becomes violence
- the ego dominates
- the environment deteriorates

With compassion:

- everyone evolves
- the environment grows
- the path is strengthened

PART IV – THE DHARMA OF BRAZILIAN JIU-JITSU

CHAPTER 17 – FOUNDATIONS OF THE DHARMA OF JIU-JITSU

What we are building here is not merely a reflection.

It is a system.

A path.

A way of living Jiu-Jitsu beyond fighting.

We may call this:

The Dharma of Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu

Its foundations are:

1. The fight reveals the mind

The mat creates nothing—it exposes.

2. Suffering is a teacher

Every difficulty contains a lesson.

3. The ego is the main obstacle

As long as there is ego, there will be limitation.

4. Practice transforms

It is not theory. It is conscious repetition.

5. Everyone evolves together

Individual growth depends on the collective.

6. There is no final point

The path is continuous.

This system does not replace Jiu-Jitsu.

It reveals its hidden depth.

CHAPTER 18 – THE JIU-JITEIRO CODE (BJJ BUSHIDO)

Inspired by Bushido, but adapted to modern Jiu-Jitsu:

1. Respect (Rei)

Respect your teacher, your peers, and the path.

2. Discipline (Gi)

Train even without motivation.

3. Humility (Kenkyo)

There is always something to learn.

4. Courage (Yu)

Face challenges, even with fear.

5. Honesty (Makoto)

Be truthful with yourself.

6. Compassion (Jin)

Help others grow.

7. Honor (Meiyo)

Your conduct defines who you are.

8. Self-control (Jisei)

Control your emotions on the mat and in life.

This code is not meant only to be read.

It must be lived.

CHAPTER 19 – MENTAL STATES IN COMBAT

Jiu-Jitsu is a map of the mind.

During combat, you may experience:

The mind of fear

Avoids movement. Hesitates.

The mind of anger

Excessive force. Loss of technique.

The mind of ego

Wants to prove something. Becomes exposed.

The mind of haste

Makes mistakes due to anxiety.

The mind of clarity

Observes. Calculates. Executes.

The mind of flow (Mushin)

Acts without interference.

The goal is not to eliminate these states.

It is to recognize them.

And not be dominated by them.

CHAPTER 20 – THE EGO AND THE BELT

The belt can become a trap.

The practitioner begins to identify with it.

“I am a blue belt.”

“I am a black belt.”

But this is an illusion.

The belt is only a symbol.

Attachment to the belt generates:

- fear of losing
- resistance to learning
- constant comparison

A beginner’s mind is always open to learning.

The true practitioner trains like a beginner.

Always.

CHAPTER 21 – SURRENDER (THE TAP) AND THE WARRIOR SPIRIT

Surrender in Jiu-Jitsu should not be seen as something to be sought.

The warrior enters combat to fight.

To resist.

To adjust.

To find solutions.

Giving up too early weakens the practitioner.

He fails to develop resilience and does not learn how to deal with pressure.

On the other hand, resisting out of ego is also a mistake.

Ignoring a lost position can lead to injury—and that interrupts the path.

The true practitioner fights as long as there is a real possibility.

He remains calm.

Thinks under pressure.

Pushes to the technical limit.

And only when there is no way out...

He accepts.

Without pride.

Without drama.

The “tap” is not weakness.

But it is not a virtue either.

It is simply a limit.

What matters is not avoiding surrender at all costs—nor accepting it too easily.

What matters is developing discernment. The Middle Way.

Knowing when to fight because there is still a path.

And knowing when to stop because there is none.

This is the balance of the true warrior.

PART V – PRACTICE AND TRANSFORMATION

CHAPTER 22 – BREATHING IN COMBAT

Breathing is the bridge between body and mind.

In Jiu-Jitsu:

Whoever panics, holds their breath.

Whoever masters their breath, masters the situation.

Fundamental practice:

- Inhale through the nose
- Exhale slowly
- Never hold your breath under pressure

Proper breathing changes everything.

CHAPTER 23 – MEDITATION FOR FIGHTERS

Meditation is not something distant.

It can be simple.

Basic practice:

Before training:

- sit for 5 minutes
- observe the breath

After training:

- simply observe the body
- without judgment

This develops awareness.

And awareness improves combat.

CHAPTER 24 – PRESENCE AND FLOW

There is a state in which:

- time slows down
- decisions flow
- the body responds on its own

This state is called flow.

In Zen, *Mushin*.

It cannot be forced.

But it can be cultivated:

- consistent practice
- a calm mind
- absence of attachment

CHAPTER 25 – EMOTIONAL CONTROL

Competing is different from training.

The environment changes.

The pressure increases.

Without mental preparation:

- anxiety takes over
- the body freezes
- technique fails

Tools:

- conscious breathing
- visualization
- acceptance of the outcome

CHAPTER 26 – PAIN AS A PATH

Pain is inevitable.

But suffering is interpretative.

In Jiu-Jitsu:

- physical pain teaches limits
- emotional pain reveals attachment

The practitioner who understands this:

Does not run from pain.

Learns from it.

PART VI – BRAZIL AND THE DHARMA

CHAPTER 27 – BUDDHISM IN BRAZIL

Buddhism did not arrive in Brazil through conquest.

It arrived as a seed.

At the beginning of the 20th century, with Japanese immigration, entire families brought with them not only customs, but a worldview.

They brought the Dharma.

These communities settled mainly in regions such as São Paulo and Pará.

They built temples.

Maintained practices.

Transmitted teachings.

For a long time, Buddhism remained discreet.

Almost invisible.

But alive.

Over the decades, it began to blossom more openly.

Brazilians became interested.

Began to practice.

Began to ordain.

And then something unique started to happen:

The Dharma began to take on a Brazilian expression.

CHAPTER 28 – THE JAPANESE COMMUNITY AND THE MARTIAL SPIRIT

The same immigration that brought Buddhism...

Also brought the martial arts.

Judo.

Karate.

Kendo.

And indirectly, Jiu-Jitsu.

In Pará, especially, this convergence was remarkable.

It was there that Mitsuyo Maeda taught.

It was there that Jiu-Jitsu began to take root in Brazil.

And this is no coincidence.

Where there is martial discipline...

There is openness to the Dharma.

Because both require:

- repetition
- humility
- dedication
- transformation

Brazil, in this sense, became a meeting point between East and West.

CHAPTER 29 – BRAZILIAN ZEN

Over time, Zen ceased to be only a foreign tradition.

And began to develop its own voice in Brazil.

Temples were founded.

Communities emerged.

Brazilian practitioners deepened in the path.

Zen Buddhism found fertile ground.

Because Brazil, despite its diversity and intensity, carries something essential:

An open heart.

Brazilian Zen is a living continuation of Japanese Zen.

Adapted.

Breathing the local reality.

And this opens space for something natural:

Integration with practices such as Jiu-Jitsu.

CHAPTER 30 – THE FUTURE OF SPIRITUAL JIU-JITSU

Jiu-Jitsu has already conquered the world.

But it can go further.

It can evolve not only as a sport...

But as a path.

Imagine academies, or dojos, where:

- training begins in silence
- there is awareness in practice
- there is deep respect
- the ego is worked on, not fed

Imagine teachers who teach not only techniques...

But also presence.

Imagine practitioners who fight...

But do not lose themselves.

This is not utopia.

It is direction.

The Dharma of Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu can become a new stage of this art.

More mature.

More conscious.

More profound.

CONCLUSION – THE PATH CONTINUES

In the end, everything comes down to something simple.

You step onto the mat.

And there, you encounter yourself.

Not what you wish to be.

But what you are.

With your strengths.

With your flaws.

With your fears.

With your ego.

And this is rare.

Because most people go through life without ever seeing themselves clearly.

Jiu-Jitsu offers this opportunity.

But it also offers something more:

The possibility of transformation.

Through repetition, you change.

Through discipline, you grow.

Through falling, you learn.

And through awareness...

You awaken.

The Dharma is not distant.

It is present in every training session.

In every breath.

In every moment of pressure.

The practitioner who understands this stops seeking something outside.

And begins to realize:

The path has always been here.

In the body.

In the mind.

In the practice.

Jiu-Jitsu is not just an art.

It is a mirror.

And for those who are willing to look deeply...

It becomes a path of awakening.

EPILOGUE – THE TRUE COMBAT

The true combat was never against the other.

It has always been against:

- ignorance
- ego
- attachment
- fear

And this combat does not end with a match.

It continues in life.

Off the mat.

In decisions.

In relationships.

In the way you live.

If you carry the Dharma with you...

Then Jiu-Jitsu never ends.

It becomes part of everything.

And perhaps, one day, without even noticing...

You will no longer be merely fighting.

You will be living with awareness.

And that...

Is the true victory.
